Development of Tourism in Assam

733. SHRIURKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any specific plan and policy to develop the tourism in Assam during the Ninth Five Year Plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what kind of coordination the Ministry of Tourism maintains with the Forest Ministry in this regard as Assam has tourist place under forests only?

THE MINISTER OFTOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) The Department of Tourism, Government of India have provided Central financial assistance to the State Govemments/UT Administrations including Assam for identified projects for development of infrastructure and promotion of tourism during the 9th Five Year Plan.

(b) The Department of Tourism, Government of India sanctioned 62 projects for an amount of Rs. 18.40 crores and released Rs.6.70 crores for these projects.

(c) Department of Tourism, Government of India coordinates with other Ministries/Departments of Govt, of India whenever Inter-Departmental issues are raised.

Development of Hemkund Sahib, Badrinath

734. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Govt, have since decided to develop the Valley ot Flowers-Hemkund Sahib-Badrinath belt as an eco-development park;

(b) if so, by when the development is likely to commence;

(c) whether the finances have been arranged from International Agencies for the purpose;

(d) if so, the name of such an agency;

(e) the suggestions made by National Seminar on the International Eco-tourism; and

(f) the steps being taken to get them implemented?

THE MINISTER OFTOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIJAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has decided to develop a National Eco-Park around the Valley of Flowers.

(b) The State Government of Uttaranchal has been requested to send proposals for development of destinations in the State and as such no time frame has been fixed so far.

(c) and (d) It is proposed to approach World Tourism Organisation for funds for this project.

(e) A National level seminar was held in New Delhi in May 2002 on EcoTourism & Mountains. Some of the important suggestions given during the seminar are as under:—

- Need to increase the awareness to keep the mountain sites and tourism centres neat and clean and to preserve ecology and environment.
- Promotion of Tehri reservoir area and Catchment areas as an important unique eco-tourism region.
- Need to develop North-East region as an eco-tourism destination.
- Special attention for the Pilgrim Centres like Haridwar, Rishikesh, Badrinath, Kedamath, Gangotri and Yamunotri for promoting as eco-cultural centres.
- The new tourism products such as Health Tourism, Panchkarma, Backwater Tourism, Yoga, Naturopathy need to be promoted.
- Tourism centres like Konark Chilka Lake region, Puri to be developed as Eco-destinations.
- Development of Handicrafts and Handlooms.
- Heritage Village as a pilot project should be implemented in selected regions.

Human Resource Development needs to be given prime importance involving locals for training as porters, mountain guides and other tourism related activities.

(f) the following steps are being taken to implement the suggestions:-

(1) Infrastructure development based on Master Plan

(2) Reduction of domestic air tariff, taken up with the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

(3) Thrust has been given to Eco-tourism in the National Tourism Policy

(4) New scheme for Capacity Building has been introduced in the 10th Plan.

(5) Special campaign for promotion of tourism in North East Region

(6) State Governments/UT Administrations have been requested to furnish proposals for rural tourism.

Unutilised Budgetary Allocation

†735. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the budget allocations made to the Ministry for development of Tourism and Culture were returned unutilised to the Ministry of Finance; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor, and the action taken/contemplated against the officers responsible for non-utilisation/surrender of funds?

THE MINISTER OFTOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) As far as Department of Tourism is concerned, out of the Plan Budget of Rs.150.00 crores during the year 2001 -02, an amount of Rs.86.00 lakhs was surrendered. Apart from this, an amount of Rs.2.71 crores could not be utilised under various heads put together. Main reasons for this were late/non-finalisation of schemes by the Planning Commission and receipt of incomplete proposals from some of the State Governments. The total amount unutilised was Rs.3.57 crores which comes to 2.38% of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.